

**Department of Family Relations and Applied Nutrition  
University of Guelph**

**FRAN 6340 Interdisciplinary Perspectives Family Relations and Human  
Development  
Course Description – Winter 2013**

Meeting Time: Wednesdays 11:30- 2:20  
MACS 331

Instructor: Leon Kuczynski  
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Course Objectives:

1. To survey major disciplinary, epistemological, disciplinary and theoretical perspectives used to understand family relations and individual development particularly as represented in our department.
2. Establish the idea of disciplinary perspective and foster respect for the validity and usefulness of different perspectives for understanding phenomena
2. Explore selected issues concerning family, family processes and human development showing how various theories and disciplines interact to provide an understanding of these issues.
3. To learn how to use, and critically evaluate, multiple perspectives in the analysis of individual and family phenomena.

Course Structure:

This is a seminar course which requires active involvement of all entering graduate students in FRHD and Theoretical concepts and substantive issues will be presented through a combination of readings, seminar discussions, and presentations.

There are two major components to this course: 1) a Disciplines and Perspectives 2) Topics on The Family and Personal Relationships ( 5 weeks) . The first component will acquaint the student with some of the core epistemological positions, theoretical models and disciplinary perspectives used in the study of family relations and human development. Accordingly, child development, family sociology, feminist perspectives, cultural psychology and family therapy will be surveyed as providing competing and complementary perspectives in doing interdisciplinary work. As well, the influence of personal and political perspectives will be explored. A dialectical model of interdisciplinarity is followed in this course (see handout on dialectics). The readings have been selected to raise contradictions between strong competing perspectives and to allow participants to work towards their own syntheses.

**Evaluation:**

The final grade for the course will be based on 3 components:

- 15%            Routine seminar contribution**
- 35%            Seminar presentation**
- 50%            Multiple perspectives paper**  
**DUE LAST CLASS There is a 1% penalty per day, for late papers.**

**Routine seminar contribution.** The grade for routine seminar contribution is designed to reflect the level of your performance and contribution to class discussion on a weekly basis. Although we recognize that students come to the class with a range of verbal propensities, we see the articulation of thoughts and arguments as an important skill to be developed as part of your academic program. Since absolute standards are difficult to establish when there is so much variation in "talkativeness", you will be asked to assign yourself a "recommended" grade on this component. We will take your self-evaluation into account when assigning the final grade.

Please use the following criteria:

- \* overall contribution to the seminar discussions
- \* demonstration in class that readings have been read
- \* evidence of a challenging or critical stance by posing relevant questions
- \* extension of the discussion by incorporating relevant research, perspectives or experiences.

The following can serve as a guide:

- 14-15 Outstanding. Materials read, synthesized and critically appraised. Class leader. Moves discussion forward in thoughtful and provocative ways.
- 13 Excellent. Well prepared for class. Regular attendance. Strong contributor to discussion. Brings critical thinking to class. Shows leadership in some discussions.
- 12 Very good. Keeps up with readings. Joins discussion on a routine basis. Consistent presence in the class.
- 11 Good. Keeps up with most readings. Follows discussion and contributes periodically.
- 10 or below Irregular attendance. Not keeping up with the readings on a regular basis. Limited contribution to discussion.

**Seminar presentation.** Each student will do one seminar presentation. In a couple of exceptions there will be 2 presenters. In terms of content, a typical seminar presentations may have several separate components which should be designed with the following goals in mind. It is important to discuss the agenda and teaching with the instructor. Provide the instructor with the power point and slide handout on the day of the presentation.

- ❖ The primary goal is to facilitate a deeper group processing of the readings for which you have responsibility. Thus, an essential component is to identify key issues raised by each

article. This is not meant to be an exhaustive summary of the article. Instead it represents your own selection of issues and ideas for exploration and critical analysis by the class.

- ❖ The purpose is NOT to lecture. The goal of the presenters is to identify key issues as a structure for a interactive discussions and to facilitate and guide the discussions using a variety of presentation strategies. Assume that the class has studied the assigned readings but that you are in the position of providing leadership in the comprehension of the article.
- ❖ It is essential to discuss issues of *perspective* in the required readings. Draw conceptual linkages and contrasts between the perspectives in the present readings and those of readings presented earlier in the course. Critically analyse the readings on the basis of conceptual adequacy for understanding the phenomenon as well as blind spots and engage the class in a discussion of these issues. Remember a perspective is a lens. EVERY perspective illuminates some things but obscures others.
- ❖ Think of the presentation in two ways: a series of content sections and a teaching method for each section
  - Use a variety of teaching techniques. An agenda for a class should include the topic and the teaching technique to be used for the topic. Examples include, large group discussions, small group discussions and reporting to the large group and experiential exercises, short video clips. There are many possibilities. But use such activities strategically. Be sure that they have specific aims and that the conceptual linkages to the readings or theoretical perspectives are clear. Be sure that the process is not at the expense of content. Similarly, exercise balance with illustrations from personal experience. These should move beyond personal anecdote to relate specifically to conceptual aims and objectives of the topic under discussion.
  - Select several key issues from the readings to grapple with; don't try to cover everything in the readings. For most presentations the goal is to identify and analyze the particular perspective of the week as well as the conceptual tools offered by that perspective. You will want your audience to try on the lens, note what it sees versus obscures and to explore the usefulness of with the smaller specific concepts. These are tools for understanding experience. Have students use them so as to appreciate what they add before critiquing them.
- ❖ Do exercise leadership. Guide the group discussion so that it is on task and you meet your objectives.

The instructor will assign a grade for the seminar presentation and will provide written constructive feedback and suggestions for future improvement prior to the next meeting of the class. Presenters are welcome to meet with the instructor for additional feedback if they wish.

Each class member will also be asked to give written feedback to the presenters using the Seminar Evaluation Form. We would like to encourage students to provide at least one constructive suggestion for improving each presentation along with their feedback.

### Criteria for evaluation of the seminar presentation:

1. **Content:** (interpretation of the material; appropriate scope and focus; presentation of key ideas)
2. **Critical perspective:** (ability to integrate and/or contrast readings; limitations; alternative views; biases)
3. **Delivery and Organization:** (agenda; objectives; timing; technical aspects of presentation eg. overheads and handouts; group activities including exercises, small group discussion)
4. **Personal Style:** (comfort; leadership; sensitivity to group process; preparation)

### Guidelines for Multiple Perspectives Paper

#### Using multiple perspectives to understand issues in family relations and human development

The primary goal of this course is to explore the way that perspectives shape *how* we formulate our understanding of key issues in family relations and human development. Of central importance in this regard, is that way that disciplines and theories, used either singly or in integrative ways, shape how we formulate and explain these issues. Perspectives, however, consist of many other elements. For example, the analysis of individual and family problems may include **micro** (focus on individual biology, cognitions and behaviour), **dyadic** (interactions, within family processes), **systemic** (family, parent-child) and **macro** explanations (focusing on culture, social structure, power, history, social movements, ecology). Whereas some explanations focus on only one of these viewpoints, there are others that examine the inter-linkages between individual behaviour, interactions and broader social processes. This results in a tension between **theoretical explanation**, which has traditionally downplayed the importance of values, and **ideological frameworks** which have placed values and cultural beliefs at the centre of our understandings of family experience. In addition, values blur the boundaries between **science** (theoretical explanation) and **politics** (ideologies). There have also been paradigmatic changes in the way that we think about science. Until recently, explanation in family relations and human development has been dominated by **positivist, empiricist** approaches which have sought to establish axiomatic theory through the identification of predictable human behaviour. By contrast, **interpretive, critical** and **postmodern** paradigms have challenged the traditional goals and procedures of science by arguing for the role of subjectivity, values and changing socio-cultural meanings in the discovery and creation of

scientific explanation. In summary, the tensions that undergird a multiple perspectives approach are as follows:

### Examples of dimensions of research to explore

<i>Disciplinary scope</i>	single disciplinary / multidisciplinary / interdisciplinary
<i>Substantive Theory</i>	e.g. attachment, exchange, systems
<i>Level of analysis</i>	micro / macro; individual/dyadic/ systemic
<i>Focus</i>	child / parent; male / female; individual/family; aged
<i>Epistemology</i>	e. g. positivist, critical / interpretive / relational...

### The Challenge

The purpose of the paper is to use multiple perspectives to understand issues and phenomena in family relations and human development. An underlying goal of the assignment is to strengthen your critical evaluation skills. Whereas a typical literature review will focus on bringing together the **results** of research, this assignment focuses on the way that the results in a particular domain are created. We want you to be thinking about not just *what* the results of research are, but how those results were created. You may choose any topic within the broad domain of FRHD - including one that relates to your thesis research interests. **The primary challenge for the paper is to explore the way that different viewpoints, including theories, disciplines, focus, values, levels of analysis and paradigms have been used to create an understanding of this issue.** It is not necessary that you attempt to deal with all of the dimensions identified above; rather, it should be used as a guide for analyzing how perspectives have shaped the issue you have chosen.

There are 3 components to this paper that should be used to organize your paper as subheadings.

1. **Literature Review:** What do the research results tell us in this area?  
Begin with a problem statement. What is YOUR perspective on the topic and why is it important to you? This should inform your analysis. What is the scope of the literature you reviewed? Do a review of the literature on the topic you have chosen and summarize briefly (3-4 pages) the key themes and findings.
2. **Critical analysis** and evaluation of this knowledge domain: How has research been conceptualized in this area? This component involves a critical evaluation of the theories, perspectives, disciplines, levels of analysis and paradigms that are present in this research literature. Critical evaluation means attending to both deficiencies in the approaches, as well as strengths. As you discuss these, make reference to specific articles that support your analysis. The primary task here is to make explicit the orientations and values that are present, but often implicit or hidden, in this body of research. Generally, **three dimensions** are a good number for an in depth analysis.

3. **Strategies for moving forward:** Addressing biases and deficiencies in the literature. The critical analysis in step 2 highlights some of the limitations in perspective. Using this as a base, what would you suggest as ways of gaining new insight into your chosen topic? What alternative perspectives would help to broaden our understanding of the topic? Discuss the implications, contradictions and tradeoffs that occur when the conceptual scope is broadened. What is obscured and what is illuminated by adding new perspectives or taking different viewpoints?

Sections 2 and 3 should constitute the major portion of the paper. The literature review should resemble a standard literature review that you would normally find at the beginning of an empirical journal article: it should be concise and highlight key themes.

Your paper should have an **Introduction** and a **Conclusion**. In the Conclusion, discuss the merits and drawbacks of doing multiple perspective science with specific reference to what you have discovered in doing this paper.

Discuss your ideas with your instructor if in doubt about topic or format.

The paper should be 16 double spaced pages excluding references and should be using APA writing style and format. **Note APA style includes writing style and modes of expression. Not just headings and referencing.**

## Schedule of Classes: Dates, Topics and Readings

### Week 1: Jan 9 - Introduction: Multidisciplinary/interdisciplinary - LEON

### Week 2: Jan 16- Positioning oneself as a Scientist -LEON

*Think about how your beliefs fit with one of the epistemological positions described in the two readings.*

1. Bengtson, V.L. Acock, A.C. Allen, K.R. Dilworth-Anderson, P, Klein, D.M. (2005). Theory and Theorizing in Family Research. In V. Bengtson, A. Acock, K. Allen, P. Dilworth-Anderson, & D. Klein (Eds.), *Sourcebook of Family Theories and Methods: An Interactive Approach*, (pp. 3-33) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
2. Overton, W. (1998). Meta-theory and methodology in developmental psychology.

### Week 3: Jan 23 Developmental Perspectives: Parent-child relationships

1. Bretherton, I. (1993). Theoretical contributions from developmental psychology. In P.G. Boss, W.J. Doherty, R. LaRossa, W.R. Schumm, & S.K. Steinmetz (Eds.) *Sourcebook of Family Theories and methods: A Contextual Approach* (pp. 505-524). New York: Plenum.
2. Kuczynski, L. (2003). Beyond bidirectionality: bilateral conceptual frameworks for understanding dynamics in parent-child relations (pp.1-24). In L Kuczynski (Ed. ) *Handbook of Dynamics in Parent-Child Relations* . Thousand Oaks CA: Sage.

### Week 4: Jan 30 Family Sociology Perspectives. What is a Family?

1. C. Wright Mills, 1959, "The Promise," in Mills *The Sociological Imagination*, New York: Oxford, pp. 3-13.
2. Luxton, M. (2001). Conceptualizing "Families": Theoretical Frameworks and Family Research. In M.Baker (Ed) *Families: Changing Trends in Canada*, p 28-50, Toronto: McGrawhill-Ryerson
3. Scanzoni, J. (2004). Household diversity the starting point for healthy families in the new century. In M.Coleman & L.H. Ganong (Eds). *Handbook of Contemporary Families*, pp 3-22. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

**Week 5 : Feb: 6 Critical Perspectives on the Family: Gender Lens**

1. White, J.M. & Klein, D.M. (2008). The feminist framework and poststructuralism. *Family Theories*, pp 205-240. Thousand Oaks Sage.
2. Allen, K. R., Walker, A.J. & McCann, B.R. (2012). Feminism and families. In G.W. Peterson & K.R. Bush (eds). *Handbook of Marriage and the Family*. pp 139-158. New York: Springer. Pp. 139-158

**Week 6: Feb 13 Family Therapy Perspectives: Systems & Narratives**

Nichols, M.P. (2006). *Family Therapy, Concepts and Methods*. NY: Pearson.  
 Chapter 4 The Fundamental Concepts of Family Therapy pp 87-112.  
 Chapter 13. Narrative Therapy. pp 337-351.

**Week 7: Feb 20 NO CLASSES SKI or Beach!****Week 8: Feb 27 - Cultural perspectives: Family Acculturation**

1. Valsiner, J. (2000). *Culture and Human Development*, Thousand Oaks CA : Sage.  
 Chapter 4. Culture and Development. READ ONLY THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS:  
 Culture in psychology and anthropology pp. 49-50, Continuity across generations p9 54-55, Personal and collective cultures pp. 55-57.
2. Berry, J.W. (2007). Acculturation. In J. E. Grusec & P. Hastings (Eds.), *Handbook of socialization* pp. 543-558). New York: Guilford Press.
3. Kuczynski, L. Navara, G., & Boiger, M. (2011). The Social Relational Perspective on Family Acculturation. In S.S. Chuang & R.P. Moreno (Eds.) *On new shores: Understanding immigrant children in North America*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Book

**Week 9 Mar 6 – Life-span/Life Course Development**

1. Fuller-Iglesias, H. Smith, J. and Antonucci, T.C. (2010) Theories of Aging From a Life-Course and Life-Span Perspective: An Overview. In T.C. Antonucci & J.S. Jackson, (Eds). *Annual Review of Gerontology and Geriatrics*. pp. 3-25. NY: Springer.
2. Lang, F.R. Rohr, M.K. Williger, B. (2011). Modeling success in life-span psychology: The principles of selection, optimization, and compensation. In K.L. Fingerman, C.A. Berg, J. Smith & T.C. Antonucci (Eds). *Handbook of Life-Span Development*, pp. 57-86. NY: Springer.

**Week 10 Mar 13: TBA**



### **Week 11: Mar 20 - Family Conflict and Close Relationships**

1. Emory, R.E. (1992). Family conflicts and their developmental implications: A conceptual analysis of meanings for the structure of relationships. In C.U. Shantz & W. W. Hartup (Eds.), *Conflict in child and adolescent development*, pp. 270-298. Cambridge University Press.
2. Levitt, M.J. & Cici-Gokaltun. A. Close Relationships across the lifespan. In K.L. Fingerman, C.A. Berg, J. Smith & T.C. Antonucci (Eds). *Handbook of Life-Span Development*, pp. 457- 486. . NY: Springer.

### **Week 12 Mar 27 Human Sexuality**

1. Rye, B.J. & Meaney, G.J. (2007). The pursuit of sexual pleasure. *Sexuality and Culture*. 11, 28-51.
2. Kuvalanka, K.A, Weiner, J.L. & Russell, S.T. (2012). Sexuality in families: the (re-) creation of sexual culture. In G.W. Peterson & K.R. Bush (eds). *Handbook of Marriage and the Family*. pp 423-447 New York: Springer.

### **Week 13 April 3 - Personal Values Family Science. 11:30-1:20.**

What are YOUR personal values and how do they affect the way YOU will do science and practice?

1. Glenn, N.D. (2000) Chapter 1 Who's who in the family wars. . In N.J. Benokraitis (ed.) *Feuds about Families* (pp 2-13. New Jersey. Prentice Hall.
2. Benokraitis, N.J. (2000). Chapter 2. Family Values: How family wars affect us. Four models of family change and their consequences. In N.J. Benokraitis (ed.) *Feuds about Families* (N.J. Benokraitis Ed.) pp 14- 24. New Jersey. Prentice Hall.

## Interdisciplinary Perspectives in Family Relations and Human Development.

University of Guelph FRAN\*6340

### In a Nutshell: Dialectics and Synthetic Integration

Leon Kuczynski 4/21/09

Dialectics is a model of nonlinear causality that explains development and change as emerging from contradictory information. Dialectics emphasizes the inherent and generative nature of contradictions that exist within individuals and between individuals and their various contexts. Contradictions are "resolved" by giving rise to temporary new syntheses which set the stage for new contradictions. Thus, dialectical causality is a continuous process of change in a changing context where outcomes are always "in process."

Riegel (1979) distinguished two kinds of dialectics. "**Inner dialectics**" emphasizes contradictions within a person (for, example simultaneously held opposing ideas). "**Outer dialectics**" emphasizes contradictions between an individual and another person or between an individual and some aspect of the environment.

Essentially, a person recognizes a contradiction in ideas and in the struggle to overcome the resulting tension, forms a new synthesis which temporarily resolves the contradiction in a novel way. Contradiction rather than congruence or harmony is important for qualitative change. Kuczynski & Parkin (2009, in press) extend the idea of contradiction to include states of *conflict, expectancy violations, ambivalence and ambiguity* as all involve points of uncertainty that provide opportunities for meaning making and the generation of novelty.

#### Four models of dialectical processes.

a) **Hegel (1770 – 1831)** thesis – antithesis – synthesis – thesis...

b) **Pepper, 1942**

- (1) *fragments* of experience which appear with
- (2) *nexuses* or connections or implications, which spontaneously lead as a result of the aggravation of
- (3) *contradictions*, gaps, oppositions, or counteractions to resolution in
- (4) an *organic whole*, which is found to have been
- (5) *implicit* in its fragments, and to
- (6) *transcend* the previous contradictions by means of a coherent totality, which
- (7) *economizes*, saves, preserves, all the original fragments of experience without any loss.

### c) Jaan Valsiner

Valsiner (1988) playfully described dialectics as the "goodness of misfit"...that novel ideas may emerge when one confronts information that is not consistent or even complementary. Valsiner (1989) formally describes the dialectical process as follows:

"The relations between X and Y is *contradictory* (a basic assumption of the dialectical perspective) in the sense that the two parts (X and Y) are opposing each other while remaining mutually necessary parts of the system. As a result of the opposition of the subparts of the whole, the whole system "leaps" to a novel state of being (incorporating a new part (Z))."

### d) Dialectics for Kids (<http://home.igc.org/~venceremos/index.htm>).

"Dialectics is a tool to understand the way things are and the way things change. Understanding dialectics is as easy as 1 - 2 - 3. One--Every thing (every object and every process) is made of opposing forces/opposing sides. Two--Gradual changes lead to turning points, where one opposite overcomes the other. Three--Change moves in spirals, not circles."

**Note bene: word of warning** Syncretism: a failed synthesis, eclectic, a dog's breakfast

syncretize, syncretizing: To reconcile, unite, combine differing elements or beliefs especially with partial success or a heterogeneous result. [Greek *synkretizein*, to unite against a common enemy].



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**Week 2: Jan 17- Positioning oneself as a Scientist -LEON**

*Think about how your beliefs fit with one of the epistemological positions described in the two readings.*

**Week 3: Jan 24 Developmental Perspectives: Parent-child relationships**

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**Week 4: Jan 31 Family Sociology Perspectives. What is a Family?**

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**Week 5 : Feb: 7 Critical Perspectives on the Family: Gender Lens**

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**Week 6: Feb 14 Family Therapy Perspectives: Systems & Narratives**

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**Week 7: Feb 21 ~~NO CLASSES~~ Beach Week!**

**Week 8: Feb 28 - Cultural perspectives: Family Acculturation**

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**Week 9 Mar 6 - Lifespan / Life Course Development**

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**Week 10: Mar 13 ~~TBA~~ No Class**

**Week 11: Mar 20 – Conflict and Close Relationship**

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**Week 12: Mar 27 Human Sexuality**

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**Week 13: April 3 - Personal Values in Family Science Leon**